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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HANOI 000633

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SUBJECT: Vietnam Arrests Two More High Profile Dissidents

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¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Adding to the five other individuals arrested at the end of May and throughout June, including prominent lawyer Le Cong Dinh, the GVN arrested two additional high profile dissidents on July 7 - Viet Youth for Democracy leader Nguyen Tien Trung and Bloc 8406 leader Tran Anh Kim. Both individuals are members of the Democratic Party of Vietnam (DPV) and were arrested for "fighting against the state" under vague Article 88 provisions of the criminal code. We have requested a meeting with the Ministry of Public Security to discuss the cases. End Summary.

Nguyen Tien Trung  
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¶2. (SBU) Twenty-six year old Nguyen Tien Trung, a long-time contact of Consulate HCMC, is the co-founder and leader of Viet Youth for Democracy and is also a member of the Democratic Party of Vietnam (DPV). Trung did graduate work in IT in France from 2002 to 2006 and returned to Vietnam on August 6, 2007 after receiving his Master's degree. During his time in France, Trung wrote many articles criticizing the Communist Party's leadership while calling for pluralism and democratic practices. During his graduate studies in France, Trung also assisted in creating the organization Viet Youth for Democracy, a pro-democracy group, most of whose members are Vietnamese students studying abroad ([www.thtndc.org](http://www.thtndc.org)). Trung has numerous contacts in the U.S. and even met Karl Rove at a barbeque at (former) President Bush's ranch in August 2006. Trung presented Rove with a letter to President Bush calling for democracy for Vietnam. In December 2007 (during the run-up to the Olympics), Trung also participated in an anti-China demonstration in HCMC that focused on the sovereignty dispute between China and Vietnam over the Spratly islands.

¶3. (SBU) Immediately after his return to HCMC in 2007, Trung was visited by the police and invited to working sessions -- which he refused to attend. In August 2007, IBM Vietnam in HCMC offered Trung a job as an IT engineer. Trung told us that after a visit by the police IBM then nullified his job offer without explanation. In a somewhat unusual move for a foreign-educated expert in a high-priority field, in March of 2008 Trung was drafted into Vietnam's army for an 18 month tour. At the time, he blogged that his entry into the VN military marked a significant turning point since it meant that the VN military would become a multi-party organization. At the end of 2008, district civilian and military authorities summoned Trung's parents for a meeting during which they read articles from the MPS newspaper (Cong An Nhan Dan) depicting the DPV and Trung's Viet Youth for Democracy as fighting against the country. The authorities encouraged Trung's parents to advise Trung "not to follow counter-revolutionary forces." They also told Trung's father that they knew Trung's brother, who is working in France, had joined the DPV as well. The authorities told Trung's father that he had "lost both his children."

¶4. (SBU) State media are reporting that Trung had been discharged

from the army for "refusing to obey a direct order" shortly before his arrest. It is likely that the charge stems from Trung's refusal to recite "the 10 oaths," an "oath of allegiance" type declaration that includes a pledge of loyalty to the Communist Party of Vietnam.

We have met with Trung's parents several times during his military service and spoke with Trung's father shortly after the arrest. Trung' father confirmed press reports that Trung had been arrested under Article 88 of the criminal code and informed us that police had confiscated all the family's cell phones. Trung's father was also instructed him not to speak with anyone about his son's arrest.

(Note: Trung's father is himself a retired military man who continues to have considerable respect from current soldiers.)

Tran Anh Kim  
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¶5. (SBU) Former Colonel turned political dissident, Tran Anh Kim from northern Thai Binh Province was also arrested today under Article 88 for "fighting against the state." Among his "crimes" listed in state-run media are contacts with overseas individuals and organizations fighting to overthrow the government -- namely Nguyen Si Binh, Viet Tan and other pro-democracy groups. It was also reported that Kim was arrested for his anti-GVN blogging and editorials, which the GVN claims to number more than 60.

¶6. (SBU) Kim is a leader of Bloc 8406 in Northern Vietnam, along with Nguyen Xuan Nghia who was arrested last September, and is also the Deputy Secretary General of the Democratic Party of Vietnam. Kim is a prolific blogger and was according to press reports also allegedly working to create an organization to fight corruption in the Communist Party and to assist "victims of injustice" (a term frequently used for individuals who have had their land stolen by the government). Both Trung and Kim were close associates of DPV founder Hoang Minh Chinh and attended his funeral a year ago.

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¶7. (SBU) Comment: Why these individuals are being arrested now for activities going back a number of years is not clear. The systematic rounding up of prominent bloggers who have had direct contact with pro-democracy activists such as Nguyen Si Binh and the Viet Tan appears to signal a stepped-up crackdown on freedom of speech and association.

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